

John 19:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

Analysis

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. While male disciples fled (Mark 14:50), these women ἰστήκεισαν (histēkeisan, stood)—the pluperfect tense suggesting they had been standing and continued standing. Their loyal presence contrasts sharply with Peter's denial and the disciples' desertion.

Mary the mother of Jesus witnesses the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy: 'a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also' (Luke 2:35). She watches her firstborn die as a criminal, the child she bore virginally now hanging naked and mocked. Her presence models costly discipleship—she cannot prevent His suffering but refuses to abandon Him in it.

The identification of women here is complex. Some scholars see two women (Mary the mother of Jesus, who is also sister-in-law to Cleophas; and Mary Magdalene), others see three (Mary the mother of Jesus, another Mary who is Jesus's aunt and Cleophas's wife, and Mary Magdalene), still others four. The syntax allows multiple interpretations. Regardless, the central point remains: faithful women stood at the cross when apostles had fled. These are the last at the cross and first at the tomb (20:1).

Historical Context

Roman crucifixions were public spectacles designed to maximize shame and deter crime. Victims were crucified naked, usually at roadsides or other high-traffic areas. The fact that women could approach the cross suggests either Roman soldiers' indifference or Jesus's relatively quick death leaving the execution site less guarded.

Mary Magdalene (Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή, Maria hē Magdalēnē)—Mary from Magdala, a town on Galilee's western shore—had been delivered by Jesus from seven demons (Luke 8:2). Her devotion flowed from gratitude for liberation. She appears in all four Gospels at the crucifixion and resurrection, demonstrating her centrality to early Christian witness.

First-century Jewish culture restricted women's public roles, yet Jesus's ministry regularly violated these conventions (Luke 8:1-3, John 4). These women supported Jesus's ministry financially and physically, following Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and remained faithful through the horror of crucifixion. Their testimony became foundational for resurrection faith.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does the contrast between the women's faithfulness and the male disciples' flight teach about true courage?
2. How did Mary's experience at the cross fulfill Simeon's prophecy about a sword piercing her soul?
3. Why might Jesus have chosen women as the primary witnesses to His death and resurrection in a culture that devalued women's testimony?

Interlinear Text

εἰστήκεισαν δὲ παρὰ ἡ σταυρῷ ἡ Ἰησοῦ ἡ
there stood **Now** **by** **the wife** **the cross** **the wife** **of Jesus** **the wife**
G2476 G1161 G3844 G3588 G4716 G3588 G2424 G3588

μητρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀδελφὴ ἡ μητρὸς αὐτοῦ
mother **his** **and** **the wife** **sister** **the wife** **mother** **his**
G3384 G846 G2532 G3588 G79 G3588 G3384 G846

Μαρία ἡ ἡ Κλωπᾶ καὶ Μαρία ἡ
Mary **the wife** **the wife** **of Cleophas** **and** **Mary** **the wife**
G3137 G3588 G3588 G2832 G2532 G3137 G3588

Μαγδαληνὴ
Magdalene
G3094

Additional Cross-References

Luke 23:49 (Parallel theme): And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

John 20:1 (Parallel theme): The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

Luke 8:2 (Parallel theme): And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

Luke 2:35 (Parallel theme): (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Luke 24:18 (Parallel theme): And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

Mark 16:9 (References Jesus): Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Matthew 12:46 (Parallel theme): While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

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